7:Munro & Seligman D. E-4. 5 (ca. 1900-1942) 1963
AB6 Ainu AB6

INTRODUCTION

by Hitoshi Watanabe

THE AINU are the aboriginal people of Hokkaido, southern Sakhalin, and the Kurile Islands. They have been noted for their hirsute bodies, wavy hair and long heads. In 1939 the Ainu population of Hokkaido was estimated at 160,000, and there had probably been little change since 1854. There were possibly another 10,000 scattered in the other islands.

Hokkaido is an island of about 30,000 square miles, situated north of the main Japanese island of Honshu, between 41° 30′ N. and 45° 30′ N. and 140–145° E. The northern end of Hokkaido is about twenty nautical miles away from Sakhalin, and to the north-east the Kurile Islands stretch away towards Kamchatka. The climate of Hokkaido is sub-arctic; yearly mean temperature varies between 5·2° C. and 7·6° C., with a long snow season from November to May. The island is well wooded with fir, spruce, birch, oak and elm. Most of the rivers rise in a range of mountains which runs through the centre of the island from north to south. Grizzly bear and deer are found in the mountains, and salmon run in most rivers from May till October. In the past the Ainu lived mainly by hunting and fishing, and also collected wild plants and berries.

Contact between the Ainu and the Japanese is of long standing and has taken different forms. Before 1599 contact must have been limited. In 1599 Japanese who had established their headquarters in the south-western end (Matsumae) of Hokkaido were recognized as the Japanese Matsumae clan by the Tokugawa Shogunate. They were given rights of ownership in this and the adjacent area as the clan territory (Matsumae-chi). Settlement of Ainu in the area was

11: Watanabe E-4,5 (1951-1959) 1964 AB6 Ainu AB6

III

FOOD-GETTING ACTIVITIES

So much has been written about the gathering devices and techniques of the Ainu that it is all but impossible to enumerate individual writings on the subject. Comprehensive articles have been published in particular by HITCHCOOK (1891), MONTANDON (1937) and NATORI (1945, pp. 135-212). However, they have all followed the morphological or typological approach to the so-called 'material culture' study, devoting most of their studies to such items as the bow and arrow and the salmon spear to the exclusion of such important items as the fishing trap and the fishing net. In short, little attempt has been made to describe or analyse the Ainu system of interrelated food-getting devices, techniques and activities, the elucidation of which system forms the chief object of the present chapter. While dealing with those latter items as well, it leaves out much about their technological details. It will be seen that a greater importance is attached to the essential structure, mechanism and use of those Ainu implements in relation to their activities whereby they adapt themselves to their habitat, and to the organization of those activities.

One of the basic problems in ecology is the periodicity of community activities. In this chapter, the time of the beginning or end of each seasonal activity of the Ainu will be referred to by the Ainu month and/or the solar calendar month[1]. However, what is important in this paper is not the time itself but the degree and nature of correlation between the periodicity in Ainu activities and that in the phenomena in their habitat. To examine this, data concerning ecology and ethology of biotic species are indispensable, the most important of which are given in the notes of this chapter.

Fishing Devices.

The Fish-spear.

The fish-spear, *marek*, is a long wooden shaft, with a flexible iron prong so fixed to the end that the point may be hooked to prevent the fish caught from falling off in bringing it up (Fig. 2, a). The spear was classified into two types: those with a large hook, *shiipe koiki marek*, used for such larger fishes as dog salmon and Hucho perryi, and those with a smaller one, *ichaniu (or ichanui) koiki marek*, for such fishes as cherry salmon and dace. Both were used alike by the fisherman either standing in a dugout, on the bank or in the stream, or sitting in the peep-fishing hut, *worun chise* (Fig. 2, b). Night spearing was accompanied with a torch for illumination. Torch-light

222 of the kind which was believed to be best for arrow poison were localized
314 in their occurence (p. 66). The four types of land cited above were invariably
311 distributed along any river, so that almost all necessary collecting was usu-
[484] ally done within a short radius of the *kotan*, or within a day's trip and back at the most. In the case of these particular species that were necessaries and that could only be found a long way from their homes, expeditions were
[462] sent out. The task of getting almost all edible plants, as well as varieties
[457] for raw materials, was undertaken by women and children.

Cultivation of Plants.

241 Before the land-allotment to the Ainu by the Japanese Government (Notes
[177] 9 and 10), the Ainu in the Otopuke valley and a half of the member house-
[184] holds of the local group in Kuttaraushi who lived furthest upstream on the Tokapchi and at least a household in Pipaushi further downstream, had done no farming, but other Ainus in the Tokapchi valley as well as, for instance,
[462] those in the Azuma valley, had done some small-scale farming[1]. The old techniques were simpler and the farm work was usually performed by women. The main crops were a variety of Panicum Crusgalli, *piyapa* or *ayushi amam*,
[221] and a variety of millet, *amam* or *toita amam* or *munjiro*. Preparation of
[412] field and sowing were done in July after storing of chief varieties of edible leaves was finished. Suitable plots on the river bank near their settlement were cleared and levelled with small wooden picks, *shittap*, which were also used for digging up roots and plants. Some families on the Tokapchi used a kind of sickle besides the above-mentioned implement. After the plots were prepared, sowing followed without making any ridges. Weeding was
[412] done only once or twice between the time of sowing and the harvest. The
[237] crops were harvested by picking ears with an implement made of a molluscan
[221] shell collected in the river, dried and stored. These jobs were done during the period between the last part of September and the middle or last part of October. The area cultivated by an average household in Azuma, Saru, Mukawa and Shikot is estimated by the present writer to have been between
[311] ca. 1000 and 2000 square metres. When the soil was exhausted the plot was
[134] abandoned and a new one prepared. In any valley there seems to have been no shortage of land for cultivation in those days. The cycle of shifting cultivation appears to have varied from area to area.

22 Food-getting Activities.

182 Every individual of every species of animals must get its food in order
433 of[1A] sustain itself, and food-getting activities may claim to be of basic import-
178 ance in its existence. Up to comparatively recent times, before the introduction of agriculture in its rudest form[2A], the Ainu had lived by hunting and

1A. [Errata: the word "of" should read "to". Cf. errata sheet, p. 164-A--Analyst]

2A. [Errata: the word "from" should read "form". Cf. errata sheet, p. 164-A--Analyst]

11: Watanabe E-4,5 (1951-1959) 1964 AB6 Ainu AB6

fishing and by gathering wild plants. Their animal food supplies came chiefly from deer and species of salmon, while other animals or fish except bear were rarely sought with as much industry. The plant food, though more varied in kind, played rather a subsidiary part in Ainu diet.

The devices used by the Ainu for getting their food were both simple and limited in variety, whereas the methods of their employment reveal manifold variations. The Ainu manipulated those implements, singly and in combination, in accordance with different seasons and different places. At the same time they developed multiple ways of using their devices to adjust to particular circumstances under which they obtained their food. In the exploitation of their habitat the Ainu attained a high degree of efficiency by virtue of close adaptation to natural environment coupled with mechanical principles of techniques and skills employed. In order to exploit efficiently their limited resourses they developed a multiplicity of ways to suit the biotic communities in their daily and seasonal changes. And by further applying such automatic devices as the spring bow and the fish trap, they succeeded in overcoming restrictions met with in space and time. Thus they adapted themselves to their habitat through a system of interrelated devices and techniques on the one hand and a system of organized activities in manipulating those devices on the other. By means of exploiting their habitat in such manifold ways and laying up stores for the scarcity season of winter, they had always remained a gathering people without ever turning to nomadic life[40].